

[Mr. and Mrs. Fredrick Goethe]

LIFE HISTORY

[?] Pages 22

[?] Words approx. 7510

1. March [?, ?]

2. Mr. & Mrs. Frederick [?] (fictitious name)

Mr. & Mrs. Louis [?] (real name)

[3?]. [?]8 South [?] Avenue

4. Sebring, Florida

5. Barber shop proprietor

6. Barbara Berry Dorsey, writer

7. MR. AND MRS. FREDERICK [GOETHE?]

A huge blond woman with a pleasant face opened the screen door at my knock and with a smile said, "Go right on into the bedroom, Mrs. Gothe is resting, as usual, after dinner but will be glad to talk to you." Then Mrs. Goethe called in a rather shrill but good-natured voice, "Come right on in here, you know I always have to rest awhile after dinner what with all the trouble I have with my gall-bladder, stomach, heart, liver, kidneys, and bladder. The doctor said I just must [lay?] down an hour after each meal but he didn't say I couldn't talk."

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As I passed through the living room I noted that it was nicely furnished and well kept. A large davenport almost filled one side of the small room, and at each end of it stood [small?] [round?] tables one of which held an attractive lamp. In a corner by a window stood a larger table holding a radio and another lamp. A soft [rug?] in tones of brown and tan covered the floor and blended with the general color scheme . Bright leafed [claldiums?] in [pots?] stood at the windows and several comfortable chairs completed the [??] [??????] was in mahogany [fisnish;?] the [walls?] 2 were [?] and painted an ivory-white.

I entered the bedroom to find Mrs. Goethe upon the bed, fully dressed even to her shoes but she had [spread?] a newspaper upon the snowy white spread under her feet. Mr. Goethe sat stiffly in a small chair near. Beth greeted me quite pleasantly and Mrs. Goethe said to her husband, "Fred, I am going to tell her all about our life and especially how you learned the barber trade and what a good barber you are."

Mr. Goethe smiled but had little to say, however he did remark, "Well, I've been a barber most all my life, started to learn it when I was just thirteen and knew no other work. [?] his wife [?] raised herself on one arm and stared at him [intently?] for a minute then said, "That's right Fred and now you surely are an artist, even if I do say so. Just get that picture out of the dresser drawer there, the one where you are in knee pants and standing by a man in the barber chair." After some searching he [produced?] the picture which did indeed show a small boy with clippers in hand apparently working as a barber.

"That picture was made when I first started to learn the trade nearly forty-two years ago," explained Mr. Goethe "and the shop was my elder brother's and in the front room of our home in Baltimore. I literally grew up as a barber, my mother said that nothing suited me more when a tiny boy than to be allowed to handle my brother's instruments. She often laughed and said I cut my teeth on the handle of a shaving brush. [?]

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He then looked at his watch, which was a large old fashioned open-face gold watch about as large as the ordinary biscuit and said, "Well, time I was getting back to the shop. You talk to Bertha ma'am, just get her started and she'll tell you enough for both of us. I'm not much of a talker even if I am a barber." He then 3 leaned over Bertha and tenderly kissed her, saying, "Now don't bother, [Pet?] to bring the coffee this afternoon if you are not feeling good, I can wait till I get home for supper for it."

As Mr. Goethe took his departure, I looked about the small bedroom and noticed how clean and neat it, like the living room, [Nol.?] all furniture here too was in mahogany finish. The bed was neatly made and covered with a heavy white spread, the pillow slips were of linen finely embroidered. A vanity dresser [occupied?] the space between two windows and a small table stood at the head of the bed on right, both held attractive electric lamps. A linoleum rug in blue, ivory and tan covered most of the floor, that part not covered was painted dark brown and was highly polished.

Mrs. Goethe launched at once upon conversation, saying that she could even rest better when talking.

"I am supposed to lay down after every meal for an hour, but lately I rest only after dinner. Of mornings I like to get out and water my flowers and work in the yard some. The doctor says I should not do that though on account of my heart and kidney troubles."

She paused and breathed deeply, "Sometimes I have terrible spells with my heart, just come here and feel how fast it's beating now. It goes that way all the time except when I have a spell then it flutters and jumps [so?] I can hardly breathe. I bet I have taken several quarts of [digitalls?] in the past year, why part of the time I took a teaspoonful at a [dose?] and that every four hours." As she insisted I went to the bedside and felt her pulse which was very even and normal. I made [no comment?] upon it but tried to look very serious as Mrs. Goethe resumed her story.

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"In [1913?] I was operated on for a fibroid tumor which was as large as a grapefruit. Before that for about three years I had suffered so much and all the doctor said I had kidney and bladder trouble and I bet I took this whole house full of medicine during those three years. Finally I found a doctor who diagnosed the trouble and insisted on an operation right away, Fred was then working in a shop in Tampa and not making so very much but the doctor made all arrangements for me and took care of the bills, hospital and all, and let us pay him along as we could, I sure was glad to get that done but it had affected my health so that I never have gotten over it but I do feel that the operation and removal of the tumor probably saved my life."

"Since we have been living here in Sebring my heart trouble started, the doctor said that was caused by my working too hard when Fred was so sick. Then on top of all that my gall-bladder started to cause trouble. Doctor wants to operate for that but we just haven't the money right now. We have owed Doctor Leonard as much as six hundred dollars at one time but have it almost all paid up now and I don't want to start right in and have another large doctor bill."

Mrs. Goethe paused again for a deep breath. She was very tiny, but talked with energy and evident relish and her large very dark brown eyes were clear and expressive. She was very neatly dressed in a figured brown and white house dress of a good quality print, thin grey silk hose and white kid oxfords.

"I am a great believer in doctors and medicine, I reckon. I do feel that both our lives have been saved at [times?] by the [?] and especially by the [?] kindness and help of Dr. Leonard. When Fred was taken so terribly ill in 1933 he would have died surely had not Dr. Leonard come right in and helped us. He didn't ask about money at all but just went right to work on Fred. He was sick for a long time and I worked during that time in the [FERA?] mostly in the sewing room And, even after he got better and able to go back to the shop where he worked, I kept on with my work."

She sighed deeply while recalling these days of suffering.

"We never did know just what the trouble was, but he had several bad [hemorrhages?] which the Doctor said were from his stomach and then he was in bed for several months."

"Mrs. Goethe then called my attention to several bottles of medicine on the dresser and said, "I take some of all that medicine every day. Fred has to take some medicine most of the time too and we both are mighty careful about our diet. When Fred was getting well I reckon I learned all there is to know about diet and food. We couldn't always have just what we needed then [too?] for when I was on the FERA and the WPA I made so little and Fred not able to work hardly any. [?] though matters are much better with us and I see to it that we have regular and well balanced meals and just what we should have.

At this moment the screen door flew open with a bang and a small boy in very grimy overalls rushed in, "[Chickie?] in [?] [chickie?] in [fewers?]," he shouted gleefully.

Mrs. Goethe [emitted?] a loud screech, sprang from the bed and seemed to literally fly through the dining room and kitchen and down the back steps. I [?] followed quickly to see what the trouble was. There was indeed trouble enough for in a bed of beautiful [?] of many [colors?] and designs an old hen with about a dozen chicks stood industriously scratching up the [?] bulb-like roots, [????] became almost hysterical as she flung [uncomplimentary?] [epithets?] along with sticks and stones at the [offending?] chickens. Tears ran down her checks as she viewed the [?] wrought in her [caladium?] bed.

"I declare that old hen causes me so much worry and trouble she just will not stay home and scratch. Just yesterday she got in my mauve [?] chrysanthemum and almost ruined them. Did you ever hear of another town like Sebring where people can keep chickens right in town. I saw that old hen and biddies in Circle Park last week scratching up a bed of [?]."

She sighed and wiped her eyes, "It don't do a bit of good to complain to her owner or the police they all just laugh it off. I thought every town had a nuisance ordinance but I doubt if they have one here. Two weeks ago I was real sick and so was one of my neighbors, and another neighbor had a dog that almost ran us crazy barking and howling. They kept it chained in the back yard. The other woman sent over and asked them to keep the dog still and what do you think they said? Why they would speak to the dog and ask it not to bark. That made me so mad that I told the Chief of Police and asked him to make them keep it [?] but he didn't do a thing about it."

Her flowers were lovely and I admired them as we walked about the yard. She explained that some of the [?] were very rare and would be hard to replace, as were the mauve chrysanthemums.

We started up the steps and just then the grimy little boy appeared with the large scarlet [?] plants in his arms which he proudly dumped at Mrs. Goethe's feet.

"See, me get pittty fowers for you," he said.

The very air almost blazed for a few seconds, but Mrs. Goethe managed to control her anger as she took the plants to reset [?] in the border about the front porch from which the child had torn them.

"Jimmy, you go home to your Grandma and don't come back over here today or I'll get you like I did that old hen," sternly threatened Mrs. Goethe.

"I don't raise chickens and I have no children, so I don't see why I have to be so pestered with these of other people."

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"Now that little rascal there," pointing in the direction of the fleeing child, "worries me as much as the hen and biddies and he belongs to the same neighbor too. I do feel sorry for

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him for his daddy is dead, his mother works and his grandma takes care of him, so when we moved here I tried to be real nice to him. Soon he was coming over to see me every day and pulling up my flowers about as fast as I planted them.”

We returned to the house through the kitchen which was also small and very neat and clean. Mrs. Goethe stopped to show me a fine new gas stove which she had just purchased. [Near?] at hand on one side was a sparkling white enameled sink, across from it stood a table with white porcelain top.

“I do feel mighty proud of this stove, it is what I have long wanted. I get so tired of cooking on a kerosene stove, they always are so unsatisfactory and give off such a gas. This new stove cost plenty too [but?] Fred is doing well now so why shouldn't I have the things I want and need.”

As she led the way to the living room I asked if she had rested sufficiently and she replied that she had had enough rest for that time in bed, that she was too nervous ever the depredations of the little boy and the [?] to remain longer in bed.

“If I had children [??] I might feel differently about the pranks of others, I don't know. When I was first married even though I was then about thirty-two I wouldn't have minded having two or three children but my health was so bad due to that [tumor?] I told you about that I never had any and after the operation it was impossible,” said she rather sadly.

“Now [??] times like they are, world conditions so uncertain, and neither Fred or me real [?], I am glad we have [?] 8 children. Now[?] a-days too the children sees us different, they don't obey and show the proper respect to their parents it seems like but of course that may be the fault of the parents. Anyway, I am very glad now that we have no children.”

She stepped to the window to draw aside the curtain and wave to a woman who had called to her while passing on the street. The woman carried a babe , and four other small

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children followed her. Mrs. Goethe watched her intently for a moment as she walked by and then said:

“Now that poor girl, there she is with five babies you might as well say for the oldest is just seven. Her husband makes so little too and her health is bad but they keep right on having children. In this day and time there's no reason for that for there is so much to had on the subject of birth control. I just can't see why people who are so unsuited for it keep on having children, sometimes it seems that they are the ones that have the most. Four is enough for any family and too many for most people. I long to see the time when birth control will be practiced intelligently all over the country. It just [?] does not seem fair to children or parents for there to be larger families than can be taken care of, now does it.”

Mrs. Goethe paused and absently smoothed her dress with hands that, though now well kept and adorned with handsome diamond rings, showed evidence of hard work in the past. Finally she seemed to realise with a start that she had ceased talking:

“Goodness, this isn't telling you our life histories it is. I was still thinking of that poor girl with all those babies and her feeling so bad all the time. Well now, I expect you are wanting to hear about Fred and me. Guess I better tell you about myself first for when I start talking about Fred I just never know how to stop, but you can tell me when I've said enough.”

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She smiled in a far-a-way manner and seemed for an instant to be visioning the past:

“I was born in Rome, Georgia, almost sixty years ago. To tell you the truth, which I don't always do, it well be sixty years the twelfth of August. We lived there only about eight years after I was born and then we moved to Atlanta. My father was a blacksmith. My maiden name was Steadman and I had one brother and three sisters, all now living in Birmingham, Alabama.

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"Some people say that Steadman sounds like an English name but Father always said we were of German descent. He didn't look like a German though for he was little and dark just like I am, I have the same dark eyes and straight black hair that he had and I always thought we were more like Indians than anything else. But, Father said that his Great Grandfather was from Germany and came from there straight to Georgia and settled near Rome.

"Mother now was very large and blond, she looked something like the lady you met as you came in. Her maiden name was Blankenship and she was of English descent though she did not know as much about her ancestry as Father did. She was born at Marietta, Georgia."

She sighed deeply and surveyed her comfortable little home in an appreciative manner. Waving one hand about to indicate the furnishings she said earnestly:

"All this seems like Heaven to me now and I surely am proud of it. As I was growing up we were always so poor. Money seemed to slip through my father's fingers with nothing to show for it and my mother was sick a great deal too. She died when I was about sixteen years old.

"When I was just fourteen I left school and entered a dress factory, Mother was a fine dressmaker and had taught all us girls to sew from the time we could hold a needle. I didn't earn much in those days, but even at that it was almost as much as I got part of the time on FIRA.

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I think it was about two dollars and fifty cents a week to start. At first I was on a straight wage but soon was put on piece work and then I made a little more.

"When I was sixteen I went back to Rome with my older sister and entered training for a nurse in Dr. Buddy's Hospital. That was a hospital for women only. My sister and I together

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got our room and board and ten dollars a month month, when I left nearly four years later I was getting twenty dollars a week. I never did like that work, only stuck to it because of necessity. As soon as I left the hospital I went right back to Atlanta, got me a job in Marcus-Lowe Shirt Factory where I stayed for eight years and proceeded to forget all I knew about nursing.”

A light step was heard on the porch, the screen door was opened quietly and the large blond lady of my previous meeting came in. Mrs. Goethe introduced her as Mrs. Belgrin and explained that she was staying in town with her while Mr. Belgin was ill, in a hospital, with tetanus.

Mrs. Belgin spoke pleasantly and then excused herself to do some ironing. She wore a handsome cream colored knitted dress and Mrs. Goethe remarked that she had a number of knitted dresses in various designs and colors. She stated that Mr. and Mrs. Belgin lived in a trailer camp just beyond the city limits. Mr. Belgin had been working in town at a planing mill when he cut his hand and tetanus developed.

“Poor people”, she said, “they have nothing except the little he made at the mill. She can't even drive the car, so I told her to come on in and stay here with us till he got better. We can't do much for anyone but we are always willing to do what we can.”

Mrs. Goethe [?] mad in deep thought for a moment before resuming her story:

“When my mother die , I promised my father that if he wouldn't 11 marry again I would remain single and look after him. Even when I first met Fred I had no idea of marrying him even after going with him for two years or more. But, early in 1911 my father died and then Fred and I were married.

“As I said I worked in a shirt factory for eight years and then I worked in a factory that made knit underwear. We were always paid by piece work and I became accustomed to it I did quite well. Ten dollars a week in that time was considered a big wage but I often

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made as much as fifteen. I always was quick with my hands in sewing and any other manual work.

“After we were married I kept right on with my work as long as I was able. When the tumor grew so large it worried me so much that I had to quit working, and then after the operation for a long time I wasn’t able to do anything, not even a little house work.”

A veritable cascade of silvery bird notes filled the room and Mrs. Goethe smiled lovingly and invited me into the dining room to see her pet canary which lived in a fine large cage swinging in a sunny window. The canary was a pale dull green with soft black stripes running lengthwise on wings and tail feathers. His breast was a soft fluff of pale green feathers of a brighter hue and as I neared his cage he lifted a crest of stiff tiny green feathers but continued to sing sweetly.

Mrs. Goethe explained that he was a very rare type. He was sent to her by a friend in Chicago when he was a young bird. [?] she had raised him and bred him to an ordinary yellow canary and raised a number of birds. She lamented the fact that all the young birds were yellow like the mother. Last year she stated the mother bird had died and since then she had not tried to get another. Raising the birds was such a responsibility she said so she decided to keep ‘Pet’ as she called him just for his beauty and singing.

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The dining room was small, like all the other rooms, and like them it was neat and clean and nicely furnished. New shiny linoleum in shades of green, rose, and tan, covered the floor. A breakfast set and a wall cabinet were in apple green, the table covered with a snowy linen clothe bordered in green. Flowers stood at the large window below the bird cage.

Mrs. Goethe continued to talk as I admired ‘Pet’ :

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"Fred was born in Baltimore, Maryland, and raised right there and never left the city till he was a grown man. His father and grandfather were barbers too and his older brother inherited the father's shop. They had the shop right in the front room of their home, with cooking and living rooms in the rear and sleeping rooms upstairs. Fred was just naturally a barber from the time he could hold on to anything and even before he was thirteen years old he worked around his brother's shop.

"You can tell by his name that he is German. His grandfather came right from the Old County, from Berlin, I believe it was and settled in Baltimore, His father was a German-American, he always called himself though he was born in this Country . Fred's mother was german too and when I first met Fred he talked with quite an accent, sometimes it was hard to understand him, but he has about gotten over all that now.

"After Fred learned the trade he worked for awhile in his brother's shop. At first he got only fifty cents a week but of course that was when he was learning, and it wasn't long before he was making more. He grew restless then and went to many of the larger cities and worked in some of the barber shops in the finest hotels in New York, Chicago, and [?] other places. He joined the Union and kept his membership for a good many years.

"Since he has been in business for himself however he has given up his Union affiliations. He said he was tired of having the other fellow tell him how he could work. Now he is independent and charges what he wants to and works any hours that suit him. Some people here, especially the other 13 barbers here in Sebring, get mad with him because he cuts the prices. Fred says however that twenty-five cents is enough for a haircut, and fifteen cents for a shave. He is a real artist too in cutting women's hair and has a great many women patrons. he doesn't charge them anymore than he does the men either but in the beauty shops here they charge from fifty cents to a dollar for haircuts.

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"When the women first started coming to him he was working in another shop in town here. He didn't want that work for he said he knew he could never please the women but he did right from the start it [?] seemed and soon he had a large patronage.

"At first all the shop proprietors aid they wished the women would stay away form their shops, they felt it would ruin their patronage but it didn't seem to bother the men customers [?] for they kept on too. When Fred opened his shop he declared that he wasn't going to do womens work and his shop is right nest door to [a?] fine large beauty parlor but he gets more trade than they do. Lots of women will get him to cut their hair then go to the beauty shop for curls, shampoos and such."

Mrs. Goethe spoke with much pride and showed a great interest in her husbands's work.

"Almost as soon as we were married in Atlanta we came to Florida and lived in Tampa for a season. There Fred worked in the shop of the Willsboro Hotel, which was one of the finest hotels there then. He got a small salary and lots of tips. Just one month he saved every tip for me, he cut a slot in a cigar box and nailed the box up tight. When I [?] opened it I had more than two hundred dollars and I went right down town and made the first payment on a car. We got it all paid for before we left Tampa too and mostly with tips.

"W came to Sebring soon after it was founded and have been here ever since. It is best to live in one place and stay in one shop 14 even if the wages are not so good. For so many years Fred went from place to place, which ofcourse was an education in itself for he [???] many cities but he did not save any money at all.

"In fact we never saved any till Fred got this shop for himself. When he worked here in Sebring for other barbers he never made more than eighteen dollars a week and usually it was around fifteen. You know that people can't live decently on such a small amount as that and we just had to find the cheapest little old apartments and rooms in which to live. Rents always have been high here in Sebring, as you probably know too, and so is food.

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The idea seems to be to always gouge the tourist here but in gouging the tourist the town people are hurt too and it goes on the year round," said Mrs. Goethe with fire in her eye.

"There were times when we were even hungry and we never could have ice or other conveniences and living surely was uncomfortable. I used to sometimes dread for a new day to come , the struggle to make ends meet on such a small wage was so great.

"When Fred was so sick we had to go on relief but they were good to us and helped with the doctor bill and proper diet for Fred. Then when he got better I went in the sewing room as a supervisor, there were two, and I got along alright."

She sat silent for a few moments as if resting from the excit- excitement of her narrative. During this pause we could hear Pet singing happily away evidently not bothered by any cares.

"One day Fred met a man whom he had known in Chicago when he working there. That was after he had about recovered from his illness and was working in [Bobes'] # shop again. The man had a long talk with him and then came and talked with me. He said that Fred was too good a barber to spend his life in other man's shops and he offered to lend us the money for him to start in alone. That was just what I had always wanted 15 for him but we never could see our way clear for it, and too Fred was always afraid to trust himself as a business man. Well, we took some time to think the matter over after our friend made the offer. We were already so loaded with doctor and hospital bills, and bills for food and medicine that we hesitated to get in more debt.

"It was just like I told Fred however, on the little fifteen or eighteen, and sometimes twelve dollars a week, we just couldn't get along and we were going more in debt all the time. So we decided to accept the loan. After Fred got his shop fixed up our fortunes seemed to change right away. A man offered us a nice little house to live in just to take care of the property and friends loaned or gave us furniture. A little later that place was sold but we found another nice place for a small rental but it was comfortable and attractive. Now just

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last year we found this place which is the best of all where we have lived. It is small but the rent is reasonable and it is conveniently arranged as you can see and freshly painted and redecorated.

"It is near Fred's shop too and when he is very busy I take his meals to him. He tries to be very regular about the noon and evening meal and [?] if he isn't home just at one o'clock and at seven then I knew he is held up with work and I fix his meals and carry to him."

A brisk knock was heard and Mrs. Goethe excused herself to answer. I could not keep from hearing the conversation:

"Mrs. Goethe, mama says can you do the quilting on a Quilt for her. She has just finished it and wants it quilted in a special design. She wants to send it to Ella, you know, for a birthday present."

In a firm even tone Mrs. Goethe replied: "No Janie, I don't do that work anymore now. Tell your mama I would be glad to if I still worked but it has been nearly two years now since I've done such. I am not well and I just don't feel like it."

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As she returned to the living room she explained:

"I used to sew and make quilts and comforts, one time I paid our milk bill for three months by making quilts for a woman. But, thank goodness I don't have to do such things now with Fred making a good living. Some people don't seem to know it and think because we were so poor for a long time we must remain so, I reckon.

"When we got the loan for the shop it was arranged in very easy payments over a long time and we have been able to meet the bills as they come due so we don't have to worry about that. Life seems so much better and more worthwhile when finances are ample. We

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were always mighty happy, even in all our trouble, but ofcourse we couldn't help being worried a lot.”, said Mrs. Goethe.

Several clear notes from a flute or clarinet filled the air and then there was a [?] and the notes were more carefully repeated. Mrs. Goethe leaned forward to peer through the window and then called my attention to a small girl sitting upon the steps of a house across the street, engaged in earnest practice of a music lesson.

“That goes on every day”, said Mrs. Goethe, “and sometimes when I have a headache and am very nervous it worries me terribly. That is part of the school work and a good thing perhaps for it does seem to help keep the children off the streets. It does seem to me though that the schools of today teach so many unnecessary things no wonder they don't have the money for all the work.

“When I went to school we thought that learning to read and write and some arithmetic was about all there was, and believe me we had to learn it too! Fred quit school when he was real young and so did I but we both had learned to read and write and we improved our knowledge as we could by reading and Fred in traveling about the county a lot. If the present schools put more time on reading and writing and the like 17 they would be getter fitted to take up life for themselves. The children these days seem so dependent and stay at home and let their parents support them even after they are grown up. They don't seem to know how to take care of them selves in spite of all the new fashions in school work. Why when I was fourteen I was grown up and responsible and working for myself. Do you know of a single child in this town of fourteen years of age who could be making two or tree dollars a week as soon as they started to work, or would know any kind of work to start at for that matter!”

The music continued across the way and the little girl finally achieved a perfect chord which she repeated a number of times. The effect was silvery and pleasant, the minor notes filled with a certain appealing wistfulness. Several little children had gathered at the

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foot of the steps to listen and seemed to sit in admiration of the soloist and appreciation of her music.

Even Mrs. Goethe paused to listen and soft look came into her large expressive brown eyes as the true melody continued.

“Of course we are all proud of our School Championship Band, and we enjoy the band concerts and other programe which they give. I guess music is always a part of right living, I know I enjoy it a lot over my radio— not the silly ragtime, or whatever it's called now days, but real music. Fred and I both enjoy good programs each evening. I sometimes wish, or feel that I ought to ask some body in to enjoy it too who doesn't have a radio.

“I am rather timid about trying to help others, for so long we just couldn't do anything for anybody that now I hardly know how to start and I am always afraid of offending someone. But, I do appreciate the food things of life that we now have and feel I should share them to some extent.

“When Mrs. Belgin's husband got so sick I felt that was a good 18 chance for us to do our part in helping others not so fortunate so we asked her to come here and stay to be near the hospital. It crowds us some for as you see we have no extra bed room and she has to sleep here on the davenport but we were glad to have her.”

Mrs. Begin had in the meantime finished her ironing and gone out again perhaps to visit her husband who was very ill. Mrs. Goethe stated that he had been in a desperate condition but was showing some improvement. She said that his jaws had locked from the trouble, and that the antitoxin which was given him had made him suffer greatly and become apparently more [?] critically ill but that it was the only thing to do for him.

We then talked of other matters for a few minutes and Mrs. Goethe expressed her self as not interested in politics.

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"We are both Democrats", she said, "and always have been but we don't take much interest in politics. Sometimes we vote in the National elections, and if President Roosevelt runs again, I just know we will vote and I will feel like getting out and working for him. He has made such a wonderful President, why our Country would have been in more trouble than some of those in Europe today, if it hadn't been for him. I feel like he was sent to save our United States from disaster.

"Ofcourse everything hasn't gone just like he planned and some people get mad at him for it, but he just can't keep up with every little town and county and know just how things are run there. If I was like some other people I could be mad at him too for my work in the WPA sewing room was just awful, really I would rather be dead than know [?] that I had to go back there to work the way it was run. But I don't blame our President for that like some of the women did, that would be so sill," stated Mrs. Goethe vehemently.

"[Sometimes?] I feel that maybe we should take more interest in politics but we just don't do it, seems like there are others better 19 fitted for it. Some folks say that voting is a duty and a privilege and everyone should accept it. I declare, I just don't know what it is. I know I don't enjoy going to the polls and waiting around to vote. I always feel so out of place, seems like that is more a man's job."

She paused and regarded me seriously:

"My, how times have changed! When I was a girl and growing up we never went near the polls and not even out on the street on election day if we could help it. It wasn't considered fit for women to be out that day and no self respecting one would be seen near the polls. Now the woman literally seem to run most of the elections and get right out on the streets and work for certain candidates. Maybe my lack of interest in voting is due to the influence of those early days. We never do vote in local elections though maybe we should," Mrs. Goethe stated in a meditative manner.

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"Times have changed in other ways too," mused she. "When I was a girl the liquor problem was dreadful in so many homes and there was so much poverty and suffering in families because the father drank. Now there still seems to be a lot of drinking but there seem to be very few families really suffering on account of it, and you hardly ever see a drunken man on the streets, or one being brought home intoxicated. When I was a girl that was a common thing and we children would all stand around and watch while a carriage or 'hack' as we called them drove up to a home and a drunk man was carried in. My it was terrible!"

She paused in sad reminiscence for a few moments and then resumed her conversation, or rather monologue:

"People have changed with the times about the working class too. When I first went in factory work most of it was just awful though I was lucky to get in good shops but even in some working conditions there was not of the best. We were always [?] crowded and conditions were more or less [unsanitary?] and there were few safeguards against accidents. Then too the people with money so often seemed to look down on women who had to go outside their homes to work. But, all of that is changed now and I think a lot of the changes for the better are due to President Roosevelt. He seems to have such an understanding heart and great sympathy for those not so blessed in the good things of life.

"Ofcourse the poor and needy were taken care of in those days but I believe they were made to feel objects of charity more than they are today. When we all worked on the FERA we knew it was Government help because we could not help ourselves but the fact that we had work made us feel better," stated Mrs. Goethe seriously.

Suddenly she changed the subject: "We do not go to Church," she said flatly, and then waited a if for comment from me. I said nothing, feeling that she would amplify that statement quickly.

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"When I was girl I attended the Episcopal Sunday School and occasionally sent to their Church service for I liked it all very much. I did not join for I never felt the urge to do so. None of my family were Church members and we were not brought up to feel any duty toward the Church. As I grow older I gave up all Church associations entirely. It seemed that I was either too busy or too tired to go to Church and take an interest.

"Fred was raised a Catholic and he at times attended but has not now for several years. We have only been to Church twice since we have lived here in Sebring. It takes so much money and such fine clothes to go to Church these days," said Mrs. Goethe rather regretfully it seemed.

"That's another change in times but not for the better. It used to be that poor people were just as welcome in the Church as the rich, but you just try it now. I have several friends that really had to give up going to Church when they became so poor for they were made to feel so uncomfortable by some of the wealthy members. One friend said that one member who had suddenly climbed to wealth and social position would make it a point to stand and look at her (my friend's) shabby clothes each Sunday as if she had just found some kind of a dreadful bug that had managed to crawl into the Church.

"Most of the Churches here seem to be mostly social and political clubs but I reckon it's that way everywhere now. Seems to me that if the poorer people were more welcome in the Churches it would be more Christian-like."

After this burst of apparently unpremeditated fire toward the churches, which go [?] entirely sincere, Mrs. Goethe rested a moment and then spoke:

"I Don't feel that not going to church has hurt us much. Of course we believe in God and we try to serve Him to the best of our ability. We have no special bad habits and I believe we can be just as good christians out of the church as in. Perhaps we are not as great sinners as some folks would have you believe," she smiled.

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"Some friends scold me for not going to Church but that never bothers me. As long as I behave my self and do not break the laws and become a nuisance, I don't pay much attention to what others think or say of me. My life is my own and I must live it as it seems best to me. I go along trying to do the best I can in every way. I am proud of my husband and his work and glad I was able to help him when it was necessary. Now as we are growing older I am indeed glad that we have a pleasant life and can help others some.

"When I don't feel well, and sometimes when I do, I have a maid to help with the work, or do it all if necessary. There are people right around here who say I am extravagant in that, but we can afford it and the girl needs the work and I need the rest, so why not have her."

"We spend very little time or money on the popular amusements. [W"?] 22 haven't been to a picture show for years and they always did seem a waste of time to me. Maybe that's from having to work so hard for so long and not having any money to spend in such. We do enjoy our radio, and it is a good one too. And, we [?] like to get out on Sunday and ride about in our car and visit other towns and places of interest. Often of evenings we play checkers, we hardly ever go away from home at night.

"We both like to read and enjoy the daily paper and some books and magazines. Fred is not much of a talker and some folks think he does not want to be friendly but that is just his way. He is always glad to have friends call on us but he wouldn't go to see his own sister if she lived here. Anyway I guess I visit and talk enough for both of us," she laughed.

As I arose to take my departure she went with me to the door and into the yard and offered my bulblets and cuttings from her many beautiful flowers. I left her standing in the midst of a flower bed, looking almost like a tiny brown pansy herself.

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Names used in above life history:

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Fictitious names Real name

Bertha Alice

Dr. Leonard Dr. Martin

Mrs. Belgin Mrs. Keverkee

Benes Varina